

**REMARKS**

The present amendment is respectfully submitted in response to the outstanding Office Action of March 3, 2004 on the above-identified application. Entry of the preceding amendment is respectfully requested, as is a reconsideration of the claims as amended above.

Claims 1 and 2 have been considered by the Examiner, and were rejected on both formal and prior-art grounds. Claims 3 through 5 are newly submitted above to replace claims 1 and 2, which have been cancelled in the preceding amendment without disclaimer or prejudice.

Turning to page 2 of the action, the application was objected to for not having an abstract of the disclosure as required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.72(b). The abstract appearing on the cover page of the international publication of the present application, International Publication No. WO 01/32322 A1, is attached hereto on a separate sheet to fulfill the Examiner's requirement.

The Examiner also required that the customary headings be added where appropriate in the specification. These have been added in the preceding amendment.

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Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter regarded as the invention. The Examiner's comments regarding the form of method claims have been noted. Instead of amending claims 1 and 2 into a proper form, new claims 3 through 5 are submitted

above to accomplish the same end. Entry of new claims 3 through 5, and the cancellation of claims 1 and 2, are respectfully requested.

Finally, claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,031,223 to Rosenbaum et al. Claims 1 and 2 have been cancelled, rendering their rejection moot. However, the Rosenbaum reference discloses a method of sorting postal items comprising the steps of:

- in a first sorting office:
  - a) printing on mail items machine-readable sorting codes;
  - b) sorting the mail items so as to compile batches of mail items each corresponding to a certain zone of distribution of mail items; and
  - c) transferring said batches of mail items to a second sorting office; and
- in a second sorting office:
  - d) reading by machine the sorting codes on the mail items to sort the mail items so as to compile a mailman's round.

In the Rosenbaum reference, the sorting codes are ID codes which are transferred from the first sorting offices to the second sorting office. These ID codes are linked to routing/address information, which is obtained by OCR and compared to address data from a data base, to check whether the addresses recognized by OCR exist.

The subject matter of claim 1 of the present application differs from the teachings of the Rosenbaum reference by the features of:

- compiling, in the first sorting office, an ordered list of sorting codes which is representative of the order of the mail items in a corresponding batch of mail items;
- transferring the ordered list of sorting codes to a second sorting office with the corresponding batch of mail items; and
- comparing, in the second sorting office, the sorting codes read on the mail items with the sorting codes extracted from the ordered list of sorting codes.

The advantage of transferring ordered lists of sorting codes which are representative of the order of the mail items in the batches of mail items is, that if, at the second sorting office, it is not possible to read one (or more) of these printed sorting codes, this error can be recovered by replacing these unreadable sorting codes by the codes which are at the corresponding position in the ordered list corresponding to the batch of mail treated. Thus, such mail items, whose sorting code could not be read by the machine, need not be read manually. This increases the reliability and speed of the sorting process.

In view of the above, claims 3 through 5 are respectfully submitted to be patentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,031,223. Their early allowance is earnestly sought.

Respectfully submitted,



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